



Give the People Light and they will find their own way.

The Wisconsin Light

Statewide Organization Formed To Fight Bigots and Hate Mongers



WEARING THE GREEN— Gay and Lesbian marchers make their debut during the San Francisco St. Patrick's Day Parade on March 13, 1994. San Francisco invited them to join the celebration in response to Boston canceling their Annual Irish Parade in protest of a court order allowing Gays and Lesbians to march.

Legislature Passes State Health Care Reform Bill

[Milwaukee]— In a follow up to the article in the last issue concerning the AIDS Resource Center of Wisconsin's (ARCW) fight for health care reform in the State Assembly, a major victory was achieved in the final hours of legislative debate. The focus was on the ARCW-sponsored amendment to the Assembly Democratic health care reform bill which would require a biennial open enrollment for all health insurance plans.

By a 56-42 vote, the State Assembly endorsed the ARCW proposal which assures that people with pre-existing health conditions such as HIV disease can obtain health insurance coverage.

"This was a very important win for the AIDS community," said ARCW Executive Director Doug Nelson. "It is also the first time that we have taken an AIDS public policy initiative to the floor of the Assembly against great odds and won."

"Throughout the history of the AIDS epidemic, we have had to battle the insurance industry to gain coverage for people with HIV who need medical care and the industry's tradition of excluding people with pre-existing health conditions has been the biggest and cruelest barrier.

"With the Assembly's support of our amendment which is consistent with the Senate position, the Legislature has endorsed a crucial state policy change that begins to break down this barrier by requiring the insurance industry to open enrollment in all insurance plans at least every two years," Nelson explained. "It's an important step forward and truly a rare success in the face of Wisconsin's giant insurance industry," he said.

Nelson reported that ARCW public policy coordinator Mike Gifford made more than 65 lobby visits at the State Capitol during the week prior to the Assembly vote. While support for the amendment came from Republicans and Democrats, Nelson signaled out praise for State Rep. Peter Bock (D-Milwaukee) for his floor leadership.

Other key supporters included State
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Boston's St. Patrick's Day Parade Canceled to Keep Gays Out

[Boston, MA]— If the Massachusetts State Supreme Judicial Court thought it had the last word when it ruled that Gays and Lesbians must be allowed to march in the South Boston St. Patrick's Day parade, it was wrong. The parade's organizers have announced that the parade has been canceled.

"We are overruling the Court's decision," said John "Wacko" Hurley, president of the South Boston Allied War Veterans Council. "They're not going to shove something down our face that's not our traditional values."

"We're disappointed, but we're glad they stuck to their guns," said "Sis" Joyce, a South Boston resident. "We certainly don't need Gays in our parade. It's a family."

A last minute request to Supreme Court Justice David H. Souter on March 16th by the parade sponsors to bar Gay marchers from the parade was denied.

Boston Mayor Thomas M. Menino

Cities Must Re-assess When To Issue Water Advisories

[Milwaukee]— "More people died from Milwaukee's water crisis last year than died in this year's Los Angeles earthquake," Doug Nelson, Executive Director of the Milwaukee AIDS Project (MAP) told a medical group in an address on March 15.

Nearing the anniversary of Milwaukee's cryptosporidium crisis, Nelson has urged the city to establish water quality policies and protocols that specifically address people with HIV and AIDS and other immune compromised conditions.

Nelson said that the city should establish standards for water advisories that are different for the immune-compromised and the immune-healthy populations.

"The risk of contaminated water, the health impact of infectious dosages of contaminated water and the protections to avoid illness and death are all different for these distinct populations," Nelson explained.

"There is scientific reason to the premise that people who are severely

expressed disappointment at the cancellation of the 92-year-old parade. He said that the city will sponsor the parade next year and will include the Irish-American Gay, Lesbian and Bisexuals of Boston.

In San Francisco

Meanwhile, Gay and Lesbian marchers made their debut in Frisco's 142nd annual St. Paddy's day parade.

"We wouldn't be consistent with our stand on no political or religious discrimination in Northern Ireland if they were kept out," said Joe O'Donoghue, the parade chairman.

The only glitch in the parade came not from Gays, but from the fact that the parade's four Grand Marshals were all in jail. They had escaped from Northern Ireland's Maze Prison and were captured in California. They are awaiting extradition.

immune-compromised are susceptible to lower infectious dosages of contaminated water than those who are immune-healthy," Nelson said.

"It's also reasonable, therefore, for different water advisory standards to be promulgated," Nelson said.

Nelson said there is public health precedent for such a dual approach to water advisories, citing the air quality advisories that are regularly made for people with chronic lung disease when air pollution is acute.

"The most important purpose of water advisories is to provide the public with full disclosure of risk information so that everyone can make their own decision about self-protection," Nelson said.

"The city now has the ability to constantly monitor water turbidity and particle counts and make an immediate decision on issuing a water advisory. The standards used to issue such an advisory must eliminate all risk of illness for people with AIDS and severely compromised immune systems," Nelson

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[Madison]— The entire Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual community of Wisconsin is uniting to create a statewide network. This "congress" of organizations is expected to be a powerful political force in the next few years.

"We are becoming extremely organized," said Dale Johnson, President of the Board of The United and an AIDS activist. "Bigots and hate mongers will no longer be able to attack any member of our community without a swift response from the Gay and Lesbian community. An attack on one of us is an attack on all of us."

There is a Gay rights agenda," said Karl Hoagland of the Human Rights League. "We want equal, not special, protection under the law. We want our basic civil rights. We want to live without fear of violence. We want to be able to marry and raise families. We want to pursue our personal dreams and goals. We want the same opportunities that others take for granted."

The statewide network has been the brainchild of State Rep. Tammy Baldwin (D-Madison). "We need to be unified to confront the assaults on our community," she said. "When I introduce Domestic Partnership legislation and same-sex marriage legislation, the Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual and supportive communities will be organized to lobby their representatives, talk to the media, and inform the public."

The statewide network is still in formation with nearly 100 Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual and ally organizations becoming involved, including:

The Wisconsin Light, In Step Magazine, the Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual Campus Center, Lizards (Lesbians 35 plus years in age), Northern Women, the Democratic Party, GALVANize, the Lesbian Alliance of Metro Milwaukee (LMM), the National Organization for Women (NOW), Briarpatch, Bi? Shy? Why?, Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays, Center for Public Representation, People Living With AIDS Coalition, the ACLU, Gay/Lesbian Ethnic Minority Association, Lesbian Parents Network, Log Cabin (G/L Republicans), The United, the Madison AIDS Support Network, Dykes Disabilities and Stuff, the UW System Gay and Lesbian Task Force, PICADA, Human Rights Wisconsin, the 10 Percent Society, Frontiers, Men of All Colors Together, Human Rights Campaign Fund, International Network of Lesbian and Gay Elected and Appointed Officials, and dozens of Lesbian/Gay businesses.

"This will be an extremely powerful and influential organization," said Alice Reynolds, member of the Board of Governors of the Human Rights Campaign Fund. "It will be a leader in the Federal Advocacy Network (of HRCF) that is creating a national superstructure of Gay and Lesbian organizations."

"The strategy of the religious right has been to launch many attacks against our community that leave us burned out and divided," said Jane Vanderbosh, Director of The United. "With the statewide network, we will develop our own sophisticated, cohesive strategy for attaining the basic civil rights of Lesbians and Gay people. We will no longer spend all our time reacting to attacks, now we are taking a pro-active approach."

"The statewide network will be monitoring and working with all types of legislation locally, statewide and nationally that affects the Lesbian and Gay community," said Judi Trampf, WisTec Director at the State Independent Living Centers.

"Homophobic bigot and the religious right should be very concerned," said Kevin Baird, Co-chair of Human Rights Wisconsin. "It is time for the discrimination and hatred to end. This statewide network will make change happen."

The next meeting of the statewide network will be Saturday, March 19 at noon in the North Hearing Room of the State Capitol. For more information, please call Rep. Baldwin's office at (608) 266-8570.